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Heart to Heart with Hardisty

I want to take this time to encourage our employees to consider applying to be part of the Leadership Development Program (LDP). The primary purpose of the LDP is to build and recognize potential leaders for the agency. The LDP is intended to help meet NRCS' future challenges in conservation by exposing class members to state and national issues, providing the opportunity to observe state and national leaders, and demonstrating leadership skills through projects and activities. If you are interested in applying for this experience, please see Indiana Bulletin 360-14-02 for an application packet. Applications are due by January 10, 2014.



Jane Hardisty
State Conservationist

Recently, NRCS announced new Planning Criteria. Because the new criteria is important in identifying economic conservation solutions, the Indiana Technology staff is working to provide training to Indiana Planners and employees on the new Planning processes. The agency's Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative (CDSI) includes streamlining both the concepts related to conservation planning, as well as the tools used in the planning process with the intent to allow field employees to spend more of their time in the field. Although the release of CDSI tools has been delayed, the concepts of CDSI have been released and include: streamlined resource concerns, new land uses, and new planning criteria to replace quality criteria. Many thanks to the Technology staff for providing training that combines classroom review/discussion of these concepts, as well as a field portion where our staff has the ability to 'test drive' the planning criteria on-site.

We are in the midst of a special time of year. During this holiday season, please think about the gifts and blessings you have received and be thankful for them. While we have had some challenges this past year, I anticipate a bright future for Indiana NRCS in the coming year. You, our NRCS family and partners, give so much of your time and efforts in conserving our precious natural resources and caring for the land. I am truly thankful for you and wish you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Jane E. Hardisty

***** Employee Spotlight *****

Frank Jones, Rush/Shelby County District Conservationist

Q: As the one of the newest NRCS employees, please help us get to know you better. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I grew up in Somerville, TN. I attended Tennessee State University in Nashville. My major in undergraduate was Agricultural Business. While an undergrad, I interned with NRCS as a soil conservation technician in Iowa in 2006 and Utah in 2007. I graduated December 2007. After graduation, I worked for Archer Daniels Midland as a grain terminal management trainee from 2008-2009.

Q: How did you become interested in conservation?

My grandfather had a small cow/calf operation. But, I truly didn't get introduced to conservation until participating in the student internship program. As an intern, my eyes were opened to a world I truly admired. I enjoy conservation because I feel as though I have a positive impact on the world.

Q: I understand you worked for NRCS in Iowa and most recently Illinois. What position(s) did you hold and how did your past work experience prepare you for your current position as a District Conservationist?

In 2009, I got the opportunity to start back with the agency as a soil conservationist in Manchester, Iowa. As a soil conservationist in northeast Iowa, I worked with Conservation Reserve Program filter strips, buffer strips, and waterways. I also worked with terraces, water sediment and control basins, and stream bank erosion projects. In addition, I worked on a lot of Conservation Stewardship

Program contracts. In 2011, I moved to Anna, Illinois as a soil conservationist. In southern Illinois, I mainly worked on grazing plans and forestry. Most recently, I moved to Indiana to become the Rush/Shelby County District Conservationist. Utilizing my past experiences has prepared me for my current position as a district conservationist.

Q: What are you looking forward to most in your position?

I look forward to getting to know the landowners and operators of Rush and Shelby Counties.

Q: Do you have any professional or personal goals for 2014?

Professionally, I have set long-term goals to advance in my career and knowledge base. Personally, I am going to start conversing and visiting with my family more often.

Q: Do you have any hobbies or special interests that you can tell us about?

I enjoy sports, fishing, and playing PS3.



Frank Jones, District Conservationist
Rush/Shelby Counties

Hoosier Happenings

KUDOS TO:

Angie Garrison, District Conservationist and **Curtis Knueven, Northwest Resource Management Specialist** for heading up the professional development committee that planned a fantastic workshop for the Hoosier Chapter SWCS winter meeting entitled “How Economics and New Technology Affect Adoption of Conservation Practices.” Speakers included Lauren Cartwright, an economist with NRCS in Missouri, Linda Prokopy, Purdue Extension, Tom Buman, Agren, Inc., Rob Chapman, Purdue Extension and Curtis Wiltse, Beck’s Hybrids. Over 70 professional conservationists, students, researchers, and academia attended this timely and relevant workshop that was held at Beck’s Hybrids in Atlanta. —**Jane Hardisty, State Conservationist**

Cindy Muffett, District Conservationist and **Lori Beeker, Soil Conservationist** for presenting the Indiana NRCS Recruiting PowerPoint and video to the “Intro to AG” class at the Lafayette Ivy Tech campus. Students were encouraged to consider NRCS as a career, but were also informed of our mission and goals. They spoke to the students about the benefits that NRCS could bring to their farm and their future customers, as well. Additionally, Cindy provided a brief overview of the partners that we work with and the possibilities for employment through another organization or agency. Lori described her experience as an Intern with NRCS and encouraged the students to seek internships even if they already felt they knew what they wanted to do—because, you never know when a career might open up to you that you were not aware of. Students were provided with the NRCS Fact Sheet, the IN NRCS 2012 Annual Report, the Pathways Program Information, position information requirements, and Earth Team Volunteer opportunity information.—**Becky Ross, NW Area Conservationist**

Becky Fletcher, State Public Affairs Specialist, for her vital role in working on the National Soil Health Communications Team. NRCS has won three more international marketing awards (one platinum & two gold awards) for the “Unlock the Secrets in the Soil” campaign.—**Jill Reinhart, ASTC Special Projects**

RETURNING HOME

From the “Cover Crop” blog written by Aly Zoda, Student

2004 Southern Wells graduate and former FFA member, Andrew Pursifull, ventured back into the agriculture classroom to share his background with the Introduction and Agribusiness classes. He encouraged the classes to use the entire spectrum of skills learned in FFA to increase opportunities in the future.

Fellow NRCS co-workers, Adam Jones and Joe Updike, demonstrated soil health and tested the soil judges true knowledge of their contest. Part of their demonstration included showing the difference between no-till and conventional till farming. The soil as a whole is losing vital organic matter as hay and livestock is being taken out of the corn-bean rotation. Residue from these processes helps to feed the bacteria to create organic matter. A good soil has at least five earthworms to each shovelful. As their environment decreases, the earthworms disappear. The class dipped below the microscopic level to see how protozoa and bacteria work to feed the plant. Then it was demonstrated what happens to the no-till soil and conventional soil as rain attempts to impact the soil. No-till soil drained water efficiently while conventional tillage did not. Andrea Murray got her hands rather dirty showing that the no-till soil still absorbs water. The conventional till sample seemingly melted through the wire net submersed into a cylinder of water. The employees from NRCS explained that the major problem with fields today is not a runoff problem, its an infiltration problem. Students were exposed to different aspects of agriculture and were given roads to travel on in the future if they wanted to pursue an agriculture degree.



Slake Test showing difference between no-till and conventional tillage

Aly Zoda’s Blog “The Cover Crop” can be found at: <https://www.smores.com/u/alyzoda>

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

SPECIAL EMPHASIS: NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE

Update on Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians

Under the FY 2013 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service—Tribal Wildlife Grant Program (TWG), Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians will be restoring wetlands and wildlife habitats to tribal property located near North Liberty, Indiana as part of the historic Grand Kankakee Marsh.



Wildlife habitat located on the Pokagon wetlands

TWG activities will support the long-range plan for the property developed by the Band in partnership with NRCS' Wetlands Reserve Program. The TWG project will create an additional 77 acres of wetlands; slow the movement of overland water; reduce sediment

erosion and provide much needed habitat for countless numbers of migratory birds as well as for resident wildlife. The project will also expand public awareness, understanding, appreciation and stewardship of the site's natural resources through education, interpretation and recreational activities.

The Band's wetland restoration project at the Kankakee is one that is close to the hearts of Potawatomi people, and one that also has regional importance. Utilizing supportive technical assistance from the USDA-NRCS, the Band has implemented a restoration and management program for its North Liberty property, and has identified key improvements needed to continue to successfully restore vegetation and wildlife while enhancing the visitor experience at the property. The Grand Kankakee Marsh had been an important component of Potawatomi territory prior to American settlement. Historically, the Marsh was among the most important freshwater wetland ecosystems in the world, supporting a rich and wide-ranging population of fish, wildlife and plants. Although the vast Marsh was not suitable for permanent villages, it was an incredibly rich region and was harvested, fished, hunted and trapped by the Potawatomi.



Rice Plant growing on Pokagon grounds

BAILEY HONORED BY PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Each year Purdue University's Agronomy Department honors alumni and friends of Purdue Agronomy who have performed at levels above and beyond expected, benefitting Indiana agriculture.



Picture taken by Tom Bechtman, Farm Progress, 2013

Tony Bailey, State Conservation Agronomist

Started in 2000, the Agronomic Achievement Award honors those who have made considerable contributions to agriculture and the industry. One of this year's three winners was Tony Bailey, Indiana NRCS State Conservation Agronomist.

Bailey received the award as a result of his 25 years of NRCS experience, serving as the Northwest Area Agronomist and in his current role as State Conservation Agronomist. Congratulations Tony on a job well done!

FY13 EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER SUMMARY

This report is designed to give a snapshot look at the help and benefit Earth Team volunteers gave to NRCS. In Indiana last year The figures in this report represent real people helping our field staff put conservation practices and programs in place to further our mission.

Volunteers:	1,926	5th in Region	6th in Nation
Hours:	17,725	3rd in Region	3rd in Nation
Offices Used:	60 out of 81		
Percentage:	74% of the State		

Partnership Links

IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Bi-Weekly

Updates: www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html

IN Conservation Partnership: www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html

IN Dept. of Environmental Management: www.in.gov/idem

IN Dept. of Natural Resources: www.in.gov/dnr

IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation:

<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University: www.purdue.edu

USDA Farm Service Agency: www.fsa.usda.gov

Hoosier Happenings (cont.)

VOLUNTEERS TO BE AWARDED AT BANQUET

The Earth Team Volunteer award is presented annually by the USDA-NRCS to a team of deserving Soil and Water Conservation District supervisors, conservation partnership staff and Earth Team volunteers that have gone above and beyond in helping NRCS reach their goal of “helping people help the land.” The 2013 Indiana Earth Team Volunteer Award goes to the Montgomery County Conservation Education Group.



Learning about grasses

Each year, we are finding more and more children do not fully understand where their food comes from or the importance of conserving our natural resources for future generations. While these lessons can be taught in a classroom setting, a hands-on experience gives these students a sense of how important these topics really are and leaves them going home with a positive impression. In response to this need, the Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District completed their 16th annual fourth grade field day since starting in 1997.

This event invites all four grade students in Montgomery County to participate in a hands-on learning experience on a working farm. The topics that the students and teachers participate in include wildlife, soils and erosion, entomology, forestry, water quality, prairie grasses, worms and composting, and the water cycle. These sessions are taught by local conservation leaders including park naturalist, state department of agriculture specialists, surrounding county SWCD technicians, and NRCS employees. An additional benefit to this field day is incorporating the local FFA students as presenters, allowing them to perfect their public speaking skills by teaching fourth graders about the water cycle.



Entomology Lessons

This incredible task is accomplished with the help of more than fifty individual volunteers that put in over 400 hours of volunteer time to make it a successful event. They taught approximately 460 students the importance of conserving our natural resources, while helping NRCS attain their goals and objectives of addressing this priority item.

The Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District has shown great leadership in supporting the environmental education movement and helping NRCS accomplish its conservation goals. Congratulations on a job well done!

STUDENTS EMBARK ON AN AMAZING JOURNEY

The Indiana Conservation Partnership leaders have long had a goal of utilizing the Pathway to Water Quality as often as possible throughout the year. In the past, we were part of the State’s Largest Classroom tours, however it was difficult to manage because of the amount of coordination and number of volunteers needed to run Pathway.

Stephanie DeCamp, the new State Fair Education Coordinator (and former SWCD employee) offered the ICP’s Pathway Steering Committee the opportunity to pilot a session this past fall as part of the state fair’s “Global Learning Initiative.”

Through the first “Amazing Journey” held in October, students embarked on a quest to discover water quality. The Glass Barn, Normandy Barn and Pathway were selected as venues because they all have water quality practices as part of their exhibit. Pathway set up four stations to help students learn how a rain drop can stay clean, the importance of soil and water artifacts, how water travels through a watershed, how soil is different, how soil filters water, and also how water can be captured from roofs and other hard surfaces and slowly released to reduce erosion and pollution.



Watershed Adventure



Presentation on Soils

Forty-one students from the 4th and 5th grade participated in the first field trip. Teachers were pleased with the content and are interested in us providing more experiences.

Next year the committee plans to host tours during the second week of fair (for students that return to school early) and also offer school tours during a two week time period in September.

Curriculum for the tours was developed by Gary Struben, Sara Waters, Cindy Newkirk, Jill Reinhart, Becky Fletcher, DeeDee Sigler, and Kathleen Hagan. Special thanks to the entire Pathway Steering Committee for their endless passion in making this exhibit a success. Watch for more!

PERSONNEL UPDATE

SELECTIONS FROM VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tien Tran selected for the Engineering Technician position at the Lebanon CIT effective 12-15-13
Kent Tracey selected for the Engineering Technician position at the Albion CIT effective 01-12-14

REASSIGNMENTS

Katherine Frye, Soil Conservationist, reassigned to the Ft. Wayne Field Office effective 11-17-13
Tiffany Davidson, Secretary (OA) on the STC Staff, transferred to Veteran's Administration effective 11-17-13

RESIGNATIONS

Shannon Pierce, Human Resources Manager, on the Administrative Staff effective 11-8-13
Adam Conklin, District Conservationist, at the Brownstown Field Office effective 11-15-13

RETIREMENTS

Julie Smith, Soil Conservationist, at the Salem Field Office effective 12-31-13
Kenneth Collins, Forester, on the Technology Staff effective 01-3-14
Charles VanSickle, Engineering Technician, on the Greensburg CIT effective 01-03-14

Historical Photo of the Issue



As the Public Affairs staff continues to sort through filing cabinets of old photos to archive, we thought it would be fun to share some of our favorites and the descriptions that were included with each photo.

DATE: September 5, 1951

LOCATION: Elkhart County, 3 miles northeast of Goshen

TITLE: GRAIN BOX

DESCRIPTION: Grain box of drill mounted on front of John Deere tractor. Grain box is 8 feet wide. Used to sow rye cover crop in corn at last cultivation.

Mark Your Calendar

DECEMBER

- 17: Area Conservationist Meeting
ICP Leaders Meeting
- 19: Leadership Team Meeting
- 25: Christmas—Office closed

JANUARY

- 6-8: IASWCD Annual Meeting
- 8: Southeast Area Meeting
- 14: SAC/FAC Meeting
- 21-23: Hort Congress
- 28: Northwest Area Meeting
- 29: Southwest Area Meeting



You can find up-to-date information about upcoming events on the Indiana SharePoint site at:
<https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/central/in/Lists/Calendar/calendar.aspx>